

PRATT, CHARLES H.

INTERVIEW

4244

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

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4244

Field Worker's name Chester A. Lamb

This report made on (date) May 28, 1937

1. Name Charles H. Pratt,

2. Post Office Address Anadarko, Oklahoma.

3. Residence address (or location) Anadarko, Oklahoma.

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month April Day 27 Year 1866.

5. Place of birth Danville, Illinois.

6. Name of Father Thomas Pratt. Place of birth Danville, Ill.

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Nancy Pratt. Place of birth Danville, Ill.

Other information about mother _____

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached 5.

Chester A. Lamb,
Field Worker.

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From a Personal Interview With
Charles H. Pratt, City Hall,
Anadarko, Oklahoma.

Mr. Pratt was born April 27, 1866, seven miles south of Danville, Illinois. He attended a country school from the age of seven to fourteen. Also attended a high school from fourteen to twenty-one. After teaching school for a few years, he took a teacher's training course in the Northern State Teachers Training School, Normal, Illinois. Mr. Pratt moved to Anadarko, Oklahoma, October 31, 1901, when he was thirty-five years old.

On December 11, 1901, he purchased and filed on the W. T. Ratliff homestead. Mr. Ratliff had formerly drawn this farm under the lottery scheme for the homeseekers. This lottery drawing was for the purpose of eliminating the run of soonerism and its attending disasters, and it did just that thing. The reason for Mr. Ratliff's relinquishment of his homestead was family sickness. He sold the land he had drawn to Mr. Pratt for \$456.00.

Mr. Pratt started improving the homestead on December 26, 1901, and within seven years had seventy acres under cultivation, a splendid well of water, a good house and barn, and fields fenced. Before he took possession of the property it had never been occupied and there were no improvements on it of any kind. Besides the work on

the homestead he found time for other duties in the community. He was elected clerk of the school board at the first meeting. There were thirty-one families in the district, all from different states. They were all pioneering and homesteading.

THE FOOD PROBLEM

The garden of the first season yielded many sorts of food (29 different varieties, as testing the soil). Most of the food supplies were purchased from stores at Anadarko, El Reno, Binger, Minco, Union City, and other places; Union City being the nearest town, just fourteen miles east of the farm. The post-office was named Basque, which was two miles east and three quarters of a mile north of the dwelling house. Basque consisted of just one general store where some of the food articles were purchased. It is no longer in existence.

WILD GAME.

Wild game was plentiful, as wild turkeys, deer, squirrel, quail, and swamp rabbits were plentiful. "Varmints" were so common and devastating that the people could not raise chickens, turkeys, geese or ducks for many years. There were no bobcats, lynx, coyotes, wolves, and pole-cats, always prowling around the country. There were many bull-snakes, some quite large, which kept out the dreaded rattle-snakes; and the bull-snake was regarded as the farmer's friend.

INDIANS:

There were many Indians residing on their allotments near the home of Mr. Pratt, and many times there were long trains of them moving through the country. There was not one instance when the Indians gave him any trouble; but on the other hand, they were cheerful and took part in the community meetings and entertainments. They would bring their tom-toms and play and sing for the entertainment of the white settlers. Mr. Pratt is well acquainted with many of the six tribes of Indians, under the Kiowa Indian Agency at Anadarko. He knows personally nearly every chief on the reservations. He found that when one made the acquaintance of one of these Indian Chiefs and gained friendship, the Chief would continue to be your friend indefinitely. He found them to be very dependable. As a rule the Indian women were for everything that was fine in their men folks, and they fought against all wrongs.

Mr. Pratt was elected historian for the Wichita-Delaware Council, and has compiled their history from 1837 to the present.

INDEPENDENT OCCUPATIONS:

Mr. Pratt has taught school in Illinois, Georgia, and Oklahoma. He was a commission merchant in Danville,

Illinois, for two years, and a homesteader in Caddo County, Oklahoma, for seven years. He has served as Secretary of the Retail Credit Men's Association from September 24, 1908, until the present day.

COMMUNITY SERVICES:

He organized the first Law and Order League in Anadarko and Caddo County against the boot-leggers. Organized the Provident Society, or the Goodfellowship Association, to help the worthy distressed. He helped organize the Council of Defence during the World War. Was elected the Chairman of the Merchants Representatives, for gathering peach seeds to be used in making gas masks for soldiers. Was Chairman of the Farmer-Labor movement to get men to work in the fields to produce more, since many of the farm boys were in the army.

ANCESTORS:

Mr. Pratt's ancestors are of French (father's side) and Scottish (mother's side) extraction, one line having been traced back through the Springers to Louis 11, 740 A. D. His parents were pioneers of Vermillion County, Illinois. His father's name was Thomas Pratt; his mother's, Nancy (Scott) Pratt. They farmed, raised stock, and operated a farm in Illinois. For more than a score of

years, his father was a drover, buying and shipping carloads of fat cattle, hogs, and sheep to the various packing companies in Chicago, Kansas City, and other places. Mr. Pratt is the seventh of a family of ten children, there being five girls and five boys. All of the boys reside in Oklahoma, except Thomas C. Pratt who lives in California. All the girls are dead with the exception of Mrs. Esther Jones, who lives in Akron, Ohio.